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III. *Part of a Letter from the Reverend Mr Abraham de la Pryme to the Publisher, concerning Trees found under Ground in Hatfield Chace.*

Thorn, Nov. 19. 1701.

Honoured Sir,

IT hath been the good Providence of God to settle me in this part of the Country, where near abouts I was bred and born (and therefore may write with more assurance thereof, than any one can from a superficial and transitory view and enquiry) to wit, at the Ancient Town of *Thorn*, within the famous Levels of *Hatfield Chace* (so well known in the Courts of *Westminster*, for the great Suits that have been depending there about them, this threescore and ten years) which Levels were the greatest Chace of Red Deer that K. Ch. the First had in all *England*, containing within all Limits above 180000 Acres of Land, about half of which was yearly drowned, and hurtfully surrounded with an Ocean of Waters. This he bargains with, and sells unto one Sir *Cornelius Vermuiden* a *Dutchman*, to dischace, drain and reduce to constant Arable and Pasture Grounds, which to the wonderful surprize of the whole Nation, the vast advantage of the whole Country round about, which before was but Barbarous, thinly Inhabited, Poor and Beggarly, and at the incredible labour, and charges of above 400000*l.* he at length bravely and effectually performed. Whose name deserves a thousand times more to be honourably mentioned and recorded in all our Histories than *Scaurus*'s was in those of *Rome*, for draining a great Lake in *Italy*, not a quarter so big as this.

In the Soil of all, or most of which the abovesaid 180000 Acres of Land, of which 90000 were drained, even in the bottom of the River of *Ouse*, in the bottom of the adventitious Soil of all *Marshland*, and round about by the skirts of the *Lincolnsire* *Wolds* unto *Gainsburg*, *Bawtry*, *Doncaster*, *Baln*, *Snaith* and *Holden*, are found infinite Millions of the Roots and Bodies of Trees of all bignesses great and little, and of most of the sorts that this famous Island either formerly did, or that at present does produce, as Pitch Trees commonly called Firrs, Oaks, Birch, Beech, Yew, Wirethorn, Willow, Ash, &c. the Roots of all, or most of which stand in the Soil in their natural postures, as thick as ever they could grow, as the bodies of most of them lye by their proper Roots. Most of the great Trees, by all their length about a yard from their great Roots (unto which they did most evidently belong, both by their situation, and the sameness of the Wood) with their tops commonly North East, tho indeed the smaller Trees lye almost every way cross those, some above, some under, a 3d part of all which are Pitch Trees, commonly called Firrs, some of which have been found of 30 yards length and above, and have been fold to make Masts and Keels for Ships of. Oaks have been found of 20, 30 and 35 yards long, yet wanting many yards at the small end. Some of which have been fold for 4, 8, 10 and 15 l. a piece. Which are as black as Ebony, and very lasting and durable in any service that they are put unto. As for Ashes, it is commonly observed of them, that their Constituent parts Texture are so dissolved, that they become as soft as Earth, and are commonly cut in pieces by the Workmens Spades, which as soon as flung up into the open air, fall away into Dust; but all the rest, even the Willows themselves, which are softer than Ashes, preserve their substance and texture to this day. I have seen some Pitch or Firr Trees, that as they have laid all along, after that they were fall'n, have struck up great branches from their sides, which have grown

grown unto the Thickness and Height of considerable Trees.

It is very observable, Sir, and manifestly evident, that many of those Trees of all sorts have been burnt, but especially the Pitch or Firr Trees, some quite through, and some all on a side ; some have been found chopp'd and squared, some bored through, othersome half Riven with great Wooden Wedges and Stones in them, and broken Ax-heads, somewhat like Sacrificing Axes in shape, and all this in such places, and at such depths as could never be opened from the Destruction of this Forest, until the time of the drainage. Near a great Root in the Parish of *Hatfield*, was found 8 or 9 Coins of some of the *Roman* Emperors, but exceedingly consumed and defaced with time, and it is very observable, that upon the confines of this low Country between *Burningham* and *Brumby* in *Lincolnsire*, are several great Hills of loose Sand, which as they are yearly worn and blown away with the Sand, are discovered under them many Roots of great Firrs or Pitch Trees, with the Impresses of the Ax as fresh upon them, as if they had but been cut down a few Weeks, which I have several times with pleasure taken notice of, as I have rid that way.

Hazle Nuts and Acorns have frequently been found at the bottom of the Soil of those Levels and Mores, and Firr or Pitch Tree Apples or Cones in great quantities by whole Bushels together. And at the very bottom of a new River or Drain, that the Drainers cut (almost 100 yards wide, and 4 or 5 miles long, at the charge of above 30000*l.* besides the great Sluice at the end thereof, which cost near 30000*l.* more) were found old Trees squared and cut, Rails, Stoops, Bars old Links of Chains, Horse-heads, an old Ax somewhat like a Battle Ax, two or three Coins of the Emperor *Vespasian*, one of which I have seen in the hands of Mr *Cornelius Lee* of *Hatfield*, with the Emperors head on the one side, and a Spread Eagle on the other, but that which is more observable is, that the very ground at the bottom of the

the River was found in some places to lye in Rigg and Fur, manifesting thereby that it had been plow'd and tilled in former days.

My good Friend, Mr *Edw. Canby* of this Town, told me yesternight, that about 50 years ago, under a great Tree in this Parish was found an old shaped Knife, with a Haft of a very hard black sort of Wood, which had a Cap of Copper or Brass on the one end, and a Hoop of the same Metal on the other end, where the Blade went into it. Which Blade soon mouldering away, the said Mr *Canby* valuing the Haft exceedingly, got a new Blade put therein, with this Verse upon it.

*Ever since No's Flood was I left,  
My old Blade's consum'd, but this is the Haft.*

The same Gentleman also found an Oak Tree within his Mores 40 yards long, 4 yards Diametrically thick at the great end, 3 yards and a foot in the middle, and two yards over at the small end, so that by moderate computation, the Tree seems to have been as long again, for which he had 20*l.* proffered. At another time he found a Pitch or Firr-Tree 36 yards long, besides the computed length thereof, which might well be 15 yards more. So that there hath been exceeding great Trees in these Levels; that which is also very strange, is that about 50 years ago, at the very bottom of a Turf-pit, was found a Man lying at his length, with his Head upon his Arm, as in a common posture of sleep, whose skin being as it were tann'd, by the More Water preserved his shape intire, but within, his Flesh, and most of his Bones were consumed and gone, an Arm of whom one of the Workmen cut off, and brought home to his Master, which is now in the possession of my honoured Friend, and great Antiquary Dr *Nat. Johnson*, whose Antiquities of this Country are earnestly expected by all Ingenious men.

But, Sir, that all those things may not seem incredible, tho' strange unto you, give me leave to add what hath been observed in other places and Countries, upon this very subject of Subterraneous Trees, because that it will not only much illustrate the same, but also make it the more intelligible.

*Cambden* and others have told us, and it is a thing very common, and well known that most of the great Morasses, Mofses, Fens and Boggs in *Somersetshire*, *Cheshire*, *Lancashire*, *Westmoreland*, *Yorkshire*, *Staffordshire*, *Lincolnshire* and other Counties in *England*, are full of the Roots and Bodies of great Trees, most of which are Pitch or Firr, and that they have the same Positions and Impressions of the Fire and Ax upon them, that those have.

*Giraldus Cambrensis* tells us, that in King *Henry the 2d's* days, by the force of extraordinary Storms, the Sands were driven so much off from the Sea-shores in *Pembrokehire*, that under them were discovered great numbers of the Roots and Bodies of Trees in their natural postures, with the stroaks of the Ax as fresh upon them, as if they had but been cut down yesterday, with a very black Earth, and some Blocks like unto Ebony, (if there be any such Wood) the very like were discovered again at *Nengall*, in the same County in 1590, and in *Cardiganshire*, and other places since.

Dr *Plot*, (a late worthy Member of your Society !) mentions the like Roots and Trees to be found in *Shebden Pool*, the old *Pewit Pool*, and at *Layton*, and other places in *Staffordshire*, and from their natural situations and postures does rightly and judiciously conclude, that they did certainly grow there.

Dr *Leigh* (in his late Learned and Ingenious History of *Cheshire*) observes that in the draining of *Martin Meer* (which was performed but a few years ago) was found multitudes of the Roots and Bodies of great Pitch Trees, commonly called Firrs, in their natural postures, with great

quan-

quantities of their Cones, 8 Canoo's, such as the old *Britains* sail'd in, and in another More was found a Brass Kettle, Beads of Amber, a small Mill-stone, the whole head of an *Hippopotamus*, and humane Bodies entire and uncorrupted. I suppose he means as to outward appearance.

Many places of the Soil of *Anglesea* and *Man*, as also of the *Boggs of Ireland*, are likewise full of Roots and Trees, but of what sort indeed, I have not yet Learn'd: and now that I have got into *Ireland*, pray give me leave to follow this subject a little further into other transmarine Countries.

*Versteegan* tells us, that in many places of the Mores and Morasfes of the *Netherlands*, great Firr-Trees are commonly found, with their tops lying to the North East, just as they do in these Levels, and *Helmont* mentions the *Peel* there, a Turff more of 9 miles broad.

I have likewise read in some of the *French* Naturalists, I think in *Monsieur de la Ferr*, that Trees and Roots are also frequently found in the Low Grounds, Levels and Morasfes of *France*, *Sritzerland* and *Savoy*.

And lastly, the Learned and Curious *Rammazzini* assures us, that in the Territories of *Modena* (which are several miles long and broad, and at present a most fruitful dry Country, tho in the time of the *Cesars*, it was nothing but a great Lake) are found at 30, 40, and 50 foot deep, the Soil of a low Marshy Country, full of Sedge, Reeds, Shrubs, Roots, Trees, Nuts, Ears of Corn, leaves of Trees, Branches and Boughs of Oaks, Elms, Wall-nuts, Ashes, Willows, and the very Trees themselves, some broke, some whole, some standing upright, some lying at their length, &c. with old *Coins* of the *Roman* Emperors, old Marbles and Stones squared, cut, carved and wrought with the hands of Men, &c.

But, now Sir, seeing that we find Roots and Trees, with other things that are common to these Levels, not only there, but also in other Countries, the thing that yet re-

mains to be discuss'd and enquired into is, how all this comes to be thus, and what reasons and causes can be given for the same. I know indeed, that most men are for referring all this to No's Flood. But then if so, how comes it that the Trees and their Roots lye so lovingly one near another, and why lengthways, from South West to North East ? Why some of them Burnt ? Some Chopt ? Some Riven ? Some Squared, some Bored through ? Why the Soil at the very Bottom of a great River lying in Rigg and Fur ? and why the Coins of *Roman* Emperors found in those places ? &c.

In short, I humbly conceive, that all those Trees grew in the very places where we now find them, both in this Country and all others where they are found. I never heard any Objections but two, of any note made against my said Opinion herein. The first always was, That *Cæsar* expressly says that no Fir-trees in his time grew in *Britain*. This I do acknowledge to be true, and is so far from proving what it is brought for, that it is nothing at all to the purpose. For those Trees that are called Firs by the Vulgar (from their near conformity and likeness to that Tree) are well known by all Learned Men (by the Redness, the Rosinous Nature of the Wood, the Gracil Cones hanging downwards, &c.) to be the true Pitch-Tree, of which there are such great plenty in *Norway*, *Sweden*, and other Countries of the North, of which there are whole Woods of them at this very present in *Scotland*, and upon a Hill at *Wareton* in *Staffordshire* they grow wild to this very day. In an old Deed relating to this very Chace, Fir-Trees or Bushes are mention'd as growing here and there one, about 300 years ago ; and it is very well known, that there was a Tree of the very same Wood growing upon *Hatfield* More side within this 30 years, which a while after was cut down to make a Rail of, it being the very last of that kind that was seen flonrishing here.

The 2d was, That those sorts of Trees are so wedded to the High Mountains and Rocks, that they never thrive, nor naturally grow upon such Low Grounds and Morasses, as these are where we now find them bury'd. But this, Sir, I may be bold to say is a great mistake, for tho they do indeed in all Cold Countries of the North thrive best there upon the hardest Rocks and Mountains, yet are they sometimes seen even there plentiful and great, in the Low Morasses of *Liefland*, *Courland*, *Pomerania*, and other Countries thereabouts ; and in the Low Forests and Woods West of *New England*, as I have heard many Travellers affirm ; for the truth is, that which these stately Trees chiefly delight to grow in, is a Sandy soil ; and if it lye never so high, or never so low, there they will grow, and there it is natural to them. And as the Reverend and Ingenious Mr *Earat* Min. of *Hatfield*, my ever Honour'd Master, lately observ'd in the Digging of the Pit of a Great Decoy in these Levels, the Roots of the Firs or Pitch-Trees always stood in the Sand, and the Oaks in the Clay ; and I have observed the same in multitudes of places of these Commons. So that the Soil is not at all unnatural to them, as some have foolishly imagin'd ; and that they did all grow here there is no manner of doubt to be made thereof.

Thus, as all those great and stately Trees flourish'd here, and composed one of the Largest and most Beautiful Forests in all the Country ; so in the next place, I shall enquire how it came to be destroy'd, and for what Reasons and Causes it was so. All this may be known by searching into the Antient *Roman* Writers and Historians : who frequently tell us, that when their Armies and Generals pursued the Wild *Britains*, that they always fled into the Fastnesses of Miry Woods and low Watry Forests. *Cæsar* himself confesses the same, and says, that *Cassibelæn* and his *Britains* after their Defeat pass'd the *Thames*, and fled into such Low Morasses and Woods, that there was no possibility of following them. We find also that the stout Nation

of the *Silures* did the same when they were set upon by *Ostorius* and *Agricola*. The like did *Venutius* King of the *Brigantes*, who fled into the great Woody Morasses of this Country, and perhaps into those very same that formerly overspread these Levels. And *Herodian* plainly tells us, that it was the custom of the Wild *Britains* to keep in the Fenny Bogs and thick Marshy Woods, and when opportunity offer'd to issue out and fall upon the *Romans*, who were at length so plagued with them, that they were forced to issue out Orders for the Destroying and Cutting down of all the Woods and Forests in *Britain*, especially of all those that grew upon Low Grounds and Morasses. This Order, I think, to the best of my Memory, is mention'd in *Vopiscus*; however, be it where it will, I am sure that there was such a one, and that they were accordingly thereupon cut down, is evident in many Writers, who tell us, that when *Suetonius Paulinus* conquered *Anglesea*, he cut down all the Woods there. *Galen* the Physician tells us, that the *Romans* kept their Souldiers continually employed in cutting down of Woods, Draining of Marshes and Fenns, and in Paving of Bogs. It is manifest also, that they did not only do this themselves, but also imposed the same heavy task upon the Captive *Britains*, for *Galgacus* in his Speech to his Souldiers tells them, that the *Romans* made Slaves of them, and wore out their Bodies in cutting down of Woods and in cleansing of Bogs, amidst a thousand stripes and indignities: But that which is most observable, is what *Dion Cassius* tells us, to wit, that the Emperor *Severus* lost 50000 of his men in a few years time, in cutting down of the Woods, and cleansing of the Fenns and Morasses of the Nation.

Now Sir, all that hath been alledged may I think sufficiently prove, that the *Romans* were the destroyers of all those great Woods and Forests, that we now find underground in the bottoms of Mores and Bogs, and that they actually were in this part of the Country, and destroyed this

this great and beautiful one, of stately Firrs or Pitch Trees, that overspread all those vast Levels, and the Country round about ; I come now more particularly to shew and prove,

The common Road of the *Romans* out of the South into the North, was formerly from *Lindum* (*Lincoln*) to *Segelocum* [*Little-burrow* upon *Trent*] and from thence to *Danum* [*Doncaster*], where they kept a standing Garrison of *Crispinian Horse*] a little off on the East and North East, of their Road between the two last named Towns, lay the Borders of the great Forest, which swarmed with wild *Britains*, who were continually making their Salies out of the same, and their Retreats into it again, intercepting their Provisions, taking and destroying their Carriages, killing their Allies and Passengers, and disturbing their Garrisons ; which at length so enraged the *Romans*, that they were resolved to destroy it ; and that they might do the same more effectually, as well as the more easily, they marched with a great Army against the same, and encamped upon a great Heath or More, not far from *Finningly*, (as by their Fortifications there yet to be seen is apparent) where it is probable that a great Battel ensued, for hard by is a little Town called *Osterfield*. Now as the latter part of the Word is never used to be added to any other, but where there hath been a Battel ; so the former seems to tell us what *Roman* General it was that fought, to wit, the famous *Ostorius*, whom all the *Roman* Historians assure us was in those parts. But who got the Victory is not so easy to be judged of, tho no doubt it was the valiant *Romans*, who besides the multitudes of the *Britains* that they slew, drive the rest back into the great Forest and Wood, that covered all this low Country. Whereupon the *Romans*, that they might both destroy it and the Enemy the easier, took the opportunity of a strong South West Wind, and set great Fires therein, which taking hold of the Fir-Trees, burnt like Pitch, and consumed infinite numbers of them ; then when the Fire had done what

what mischief and execution it could, the *Romans* brought their Army nearer, and with whole Legions of Captive *Britains* chopp'd and cut down most of the Trees, that were yet left standing, leaving only here and there some great ones untouched, as monuments of their fury, and unneedful of their labour; which being destitute of the support of the Under-Wood, and of their neighbouring Trees, were easily overturned by strong Winds. All which Trees falling cross the Rivers that formerly ran through this Low Country, soon damn'd up the same, turned it into a great Lake, and gave Origin to the great Turf Mores that are here, by the Girations and Workings of the Waters, the Precipitation therefrom of Terrestrial Matter, the Consumption and Putrifaction of Rotten Boughs and Branches, and the vast increase of thick Water Moss, which wonderfully flourishes, and grows upon such rotten grounds. Which even now since the Drainage, and since that the Country is laid dry for many Miles round about, yet for all that, are, so furgid with Water, and so soft and rotten, that they will scarce bear Men to walk upon.

Hence it is, that old *Roman* Coins, old *Roman* Ax-heads, &c. have been found by those Roots, and Trees that lye at the bottom of these Mores and Levels.

Hence it is, that in all these Grounds are found great numbers of Trees that are burnt, some in two, and some length ways, others Hewn and Chopp'd.

Hence it is, that they lye by their own proper Roots with their tops North East.

Hence it is that some of the greatest Trees are found with their Roots on, and others as they have laid all along have had branches growing out of their sides, unto the thickness and height of considerable Trees.

Hence it is that both the Clay and More Soyl of the Country is in some places 2 or 3 yards higher than it was formerly, by the growing up of the same, and the daily Warp that the Rivers continually cast thereon, &c.

But

But to return, as the *Romans* were the Destroyers of this great Forest, so were they likewise of all thole others that formerly grew upon the Low Countries of *Cheshire, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Staffordshire, Somersetshire, &c.* Yea, and of the very Countries before-mentioned beyond Sea, where such like Trees are commonly found. But as the *Romans* were not much in *Wales*, the *Isle of Man*, nor *Ireland*, so it cannot be supposed that it should be them that cut down their Woods; but tho' that they did not, yet others did, for *Holinshed* and others of our Historians tell us, that *Edward the 1<sup>st</sup>* being not able to get near the *Welsh* to fight them, by their Continuance and Skulking in Boggy Woods, commanded them all to be destroy'd and cut down by the Fire and Ax: and I doubt not at all but that the Roots and Trees before-mention'd by *Cambrensis* in *Pembroke-shire*, were the Relicts of some of those that were then destroy'd: And as for those in *Man* and other Islands, they have all been cut down in the time of War, and have laid till they were grown over with the Soil of the Neighbouring Grounds: And as for those that are found in the Bogs of *Ireland*, many of our Historians expressly say, that *Henry the 2<sup>d</sup>*, when he conquer'd it, cut down all the Woods that grew upon the Low Countries thereof, the better to secure his Conquest and Possession of the same, to keep the Country in a settled Peace, and to Disarm the Enemy, who commonly trusting to such advantages, are apt to Rebel; for safe Retreats are commonly observed to make not more Thieves than they do Rebels.

I will add no more to what I have writ, but only this, That it is a very common thing for great Generals and Armies even to this very day to destroy all the Woods that grow upon Advantageous places and Fastnesses in an Enemies Country, if they intend to keep the same; and that they always do it with the

Fire and Ax ; Instances of which I will not here give, because I have already exceeded the bounds of a Letter.

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*IV. Part of a Letter from Sir Charles Holt, to the Publisher, concerning a Child who had its Intestines, Mesentery, &c. in the Cavity of the Thorax, and a further account of the person mentioned to have swallowed Stones, in No 253. of these Transactions.*

**S**ometime since I was desir'd by a Friend of mine to be present at the opening of a Child of his, of about 2 months old, which dyed (as he told me) after an unusual, and extraordinary manner. I found at the house two Learned Gentlemen and very good Anatomists, invited on the same occasion. We enquired into the Circumstances of the Childs Sicknes and Death, and from the Women received the following account.

‘ That the Child was uneasy and restless from its Birth, and constantly laboured under a difficulty of Breathing.

‘ That its Illness was like nothing they had seen in other Children ; neither could they perceive it relieved by any thing administred to it, tho by the advice of a Learned Physician ; but it lay groaning and pining till it dyed.

‘ That they had always observed, when the Child was undrest an odd sort of working in its Breast, and could perceive a Crawling round the Ribs and Breast, on both sides, as if a Knot of small Eels, or large Earth-worms had been penn'd up within the Cavity.

This